

Tilburg University

The failing redistribution of roles between men and women

Roe, R.A.

Publication date:
1996

[Link to publication in Tilburg University Research Portal](#)

Citation for published version (APA):

Roe, R. A. (1996). *The failing redistribution of roles between men and women: A psychological view and its unexpected consequences*. (WORC Paper / Work and Organization Research Centre (WORC); Vol. 96.01.002/6). Unknown Publisher.

General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

CBM
R
96-2
9585
1996
NR.2

UNIVERSITY
SILKE
UNIVERSITÄT
BRAMM

WORC
Work and Organization Research Centre



* C I N 0 2 1 0 4 *



R3

t - labour participation
t - government policy
t - women
t - division of labour
t - psychology
V - domestic work
t - families

UDC 155.922.1 (043)
331.430
646

PAPER

92

**The failing redistribution of roles
between men and women. A psychological view
and its unexpected consequences.**

Robert A. Roe

WORC PAPER 96.01.002/6

This paper is based on a WORC Seminar given on January 11, 1996

January 1996

**WORC papers have not been subjected to formal review or approach.
They are distributed in order to make the results of current research
available to others, and to encourage discussions and suggestions.**

**The failing redistribution of roles between men and women.
A psychological view and its unexpected consequences.**

Robert A. Roe

WORC, Tilburg University, The Netherlands

Keywords: Work, Household, Men, Women, Roles

A major objective of social policy in Western-European countries during the last decade has been the redistribution of work and caring roles between men and women. This aim has inspired social scientists to investigate the conditions for and the mechanisms by which such a role-change could be achieved. In spite of the policy measures taken and the research conducted, there are few signs of change in the desired direction. It has been found that, on the whole, the labour participation of women has increased while men's share in household and caring tasks has remained constant, and in some cases even reduced. The reasons for this paradoxical finding are still to be discovered.

This paper presents a psychological view on the matter. It points out that factors such as the habitual nature of work behavior, the inherent conservatism of the role mechanism, traditional values, lack of competencies among the male, constraints on the combination of paid and domestic work task, and negative social and psychological outcomes reduce the opportunities for emancipatory role-changes, and enhance the chance of slide-back into old behavior patterns. It is suggested that opportunities for role-change are limited to critical periods in the couple's life cycle. A description is given of a hypothetical process of role-change that covers four successive stages. It is indicated how the aforementioned factors play a role in these stages, and how they can account for success and failure in the redivision of roles. It is noted that there exists a great discrepancy between dominant approaches in social policy, and to some degree social research, and the view of the issue presented here. Some implications for future policy-making and research are indicated.

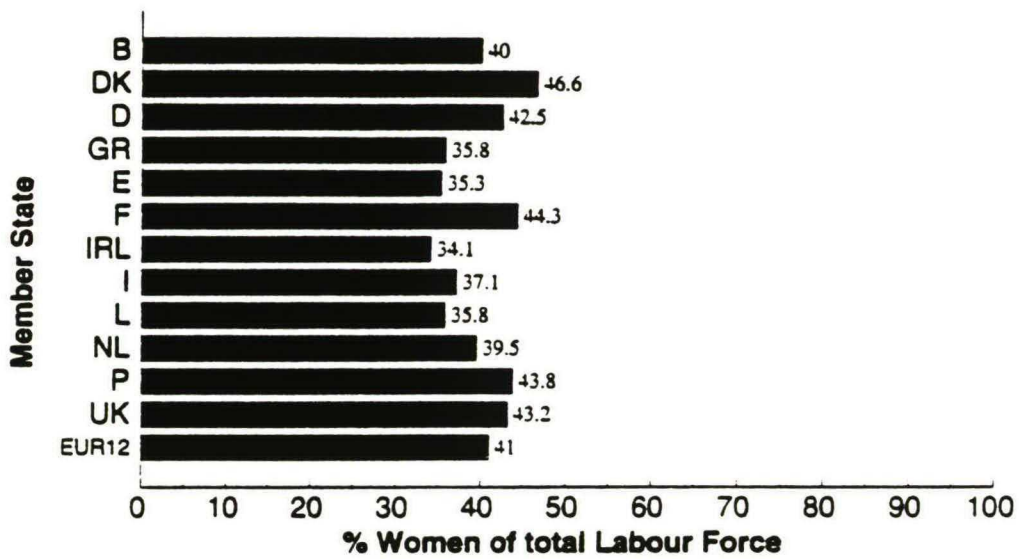
1. Introduction

This paper deals with the distribution of paid work and non-paid work between men and women in the household. Paid work is to be understood as activities performed by employed and self-employed people that generate income. Non-paid or domestic work covers household activities such as cooking and cleaning, shopping, care for the family members and maintenance. By tradition the distribution between these categories of work is skewed in most societies, men doing most of the paid work and women doing most of the unpaid work; there is a gender segregation in types of domestic activities as well (e.g. Blair & Lichter, 1991; Beckwith, 1992; Hannah & Quarter, 1992).

In Europe there have been changes over time: the participation rate of women in paid work has been increasing; in some countries (e.g. the Netherlands) mainly due to part-time employment. But in most countries the share of men in non-paid work has shown little increase or has been stable during recent years. Women are spending less hours in domestic work than in earlier decades, but the ratio of the time spent on this type of work by females in comparison to males is still 3 : 1 or higher (Kempeneers & Delièvre, 1991; Kahn, 1991; SCP, 1994). According to the 1991 Eurobarometer the proportion of men not doing any domestic chore was over 60% for the Europe Community as a whole (see Knüppel, 1995); the proportions given by the male ranged from 43% to 84%. Figures 1 and 2 show the percentages of women doing paid work in the European countries. Table 1 presents figures on the domestic activities of the men in various countries, as given by their spouses and themselves.

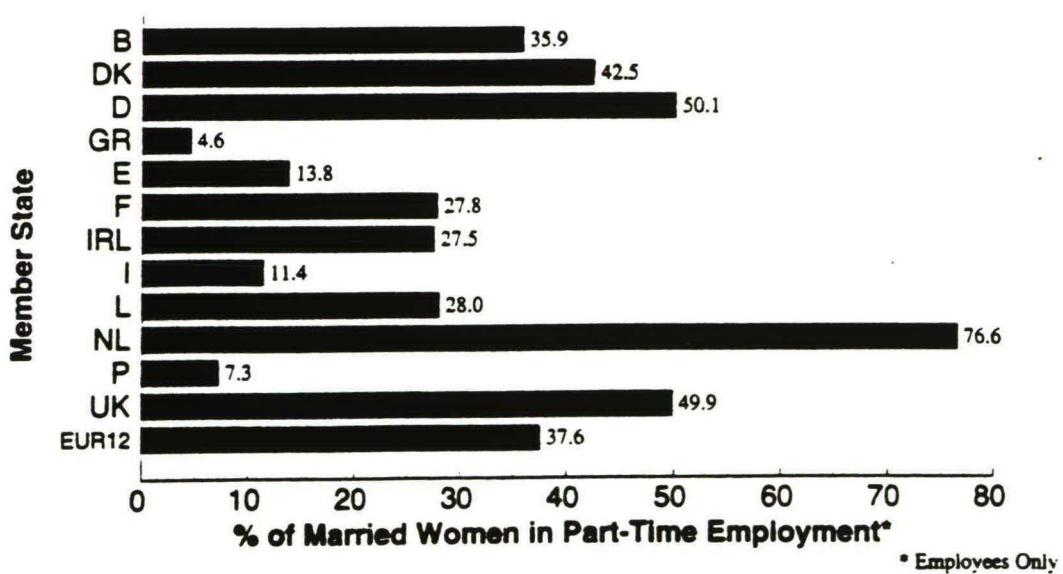
Some data on the developments over time in the Netherlands are presented in Table 2. More detailed information on the Netherlands can be found with Tijdens et al. (1994) and Geurts (1992).

Figure 1: Women in the labour force 1991



Source 'Women and the labour market'. *Employment in Europe - Trends*, 17.

Figure 2: Part-time working amongst married women 1991



Source 'Women and the labour market'. *Employment in Europe - Trends*, 17.

Table 1: What men do accoring to themselves and to the spouses (among those who 'do' something)

Source 'Eurobarometer 34 - O - 1991'

	According to spouses						According to themselves					
	Shoppin g	Washing -up	Driving children	Dressing children	Cooking	House- work	Shoppin g	Washing -up	Driving children	Dressing Children	Cooking	House- work
EUR 12	59	42	35	31	30	29	61	41	37	26	25	25
Belgium	49	55	35	26	29	29	45	58	37	24	34	33
Denmark	39	55	23	32	36	26	42	53	26	32	26	26
West Germany	70	46	30	21	22	34	72	50	28	24	23	33
East Germany	64	53	48	27	23	27	61	41	57	20	16	20
Greece	91	16	16	22	20	13	88	13	23	25	17	12
Spain	48	25	42	57	30	29	---	---	---	---	---	---
France	48	48	49	38	37	35	54	44	49	31	27	24
Ireland	16	18	72	14	10	7	---	---	---	---	---	---
Italy	69	5	39	30	23	12	58	10	45	19	17	11
Luxembourg	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---
Netherlands	53	66	6	28	28	34	59	65	8	22	31	38
Portugal	75	37	36	35	39	26	---	---	---	---	---	---
Great Britain	51	72	26	37	48	42	---	---	---	---	---	---

--- Reduced numbers

Table 2: Daily time expenditure on work and domestic tasks

Number of hours during one week in October 1975, 1980, 1985 and 1990

	Work				Household and family			
	1975	1980	1985	1990	1975	1980	1985	1990
whole sample	14.8	14.0	14.1	16.6	19.1	19.5	19.4	18.5
men	23.7	22.1	21.6	24.5	8.6	9.3	10.3	10.4
women	6.1	6.1	6.8	8.8	29.5	29.5	28.3	26.5

Source: *Sociaal-Cultureel Rapport 1992*

In Eastern Europe there seems to be a tendency towards an increasing difference: women's labour participation while having been high in the past is on the decline. There is a marked difference in the increase of unemployment between men and women since 1989, female unemployment growing faster and to higher levels (e.g. Employment Observatory Central & Eastern Europe 1995). Men's participation in non-paid work seems to decrease as well (Cernegoj-Sadar, 1995).

There is a broad consensus about the desirability of greater equality throughout Europe. Although there are some differences in preferences between political parties, e.g. Christian Democrat parties placing more stress on the caring role of mothers, most countries have a variety emancipatory policies aiming at a more equal division of roles between men and women. In the Western countries (more than in the Eastern countries) one finds many interests groups striving for the further emancipation of women. Equality between men and women is supported by a large segment of society (cf. Hooghiemstra & Niphuis-Nell, 1993). Social scientists are generally supporting these policy aims as well. Much research has been undertaken to investigate the way in which roles are actually divided and how a balanced redivision can be promoted (e.g. Van der Lippe, 1993; De Jong & De Olde, 1994; Starrels, 1994; Gauthier, 1995).

The question addressed in this paper is, why in spite of all efforts undertaken, the redistribution of work and caring roles is stagnating (Van den Akker et al., 1994), and why in some cases there is a relapse. It is not my intention to focus on the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of several social policy measures, as some researchers have done (e.g. Cernegoj-Sadar, 1995; Gauthier, 1995). In my view it is naive to assume a direct link between social policy and peoples' behavior. Since policy measures typically address a very limited range of conditions that have different meanings for various social groups, a correspondence between the intended and obtained effects may well be accidental. The Dutch Social and Cultural Report (1994) e.g. speaks of an autonomous development in the labour participation of women upon which the government has had little influence. To infer that shifts that have occurred so far are based on policy measures may well be a 'policy illusion'.

In my opinion one should rather opt for a fundamental approach and try to identify the factors influencing the (re)distribution of roles, and the mechanisms involved in the process of change. Thus, one will have to rely on theories and research in the behavioral and social sciences that can offer explanations for both change and stability in the distribution of roles among the sexes.

This defines the *aim* of my paper. I will make an effort to offer some possible explanations for the failing redistribution of roles between men and women (cf. Van den Akker et al., 1994) from a behavioral science point of view. Being an outsider in this field, my approach may appear somewhat unconventional. I am aware that there is a huge body of published research on this problem (e.g. Barrère-Maurison, 1992; Silver, 1993; De Jonge & De Olde, 1994), to which much has been contributed by my colleagues within WORC (Willemsen, 1993, 1994; Rojahn & Willemsen, 1994; Van Dongen et al., 1995; Vossen & Nelissen, 1995). It is in no way my intention to downplay the relevance and importance of their theoretical and empirical work. I would just like make a complementary contribution by presenting another view on the matter - one that may direct attention to factors that have received limited consideration thus far. Like the views of others, my view will be biased. Given my background in W&O psychology I am likely to overestimate the importance of individual propensities and factors relating to peoples work activity.

2. Approach

There are, of course, many ways in which the general problem of the redistribution of roles can be conceptualized and studied. I will concentrate on a particular facet of the general problem, i.e. the change in roles among the male and female partner in a household. Thus, I make three major restrictions. First, I will focus on households with one or more children, thus leaving men and women in single-person households and in two-person households without children out of account. This does not imply that the behavior of these people is not important. On the contrary, samples of such males and females can well serve as control samples that can help to test the validity of hypotheses regarding male and female behavior in general. Secondly, I will only deal with the phenomenon of role-change, i.e. the adoption of completely new roles, the modification of existing roles, and the replacement of existing roles by new roles within the family setting. Thirdly, I will concentrate on role-changes in which men take a larger share of the domestic work.

Moreover, I restrict myself to the broad categories of paid work and non-paid work. Thus I only consider the categories 1-2 and 3-4-5 mentioned by Kahn in his taxonomy of productive activities (Kahn, 1991; see Table 3).

Table 3: Types of productive activities among men and women (Kahn, 1991)

	Percentage participating			Hours during past year		
	Men	sign.	Women	Men	sign.	Women
Regular work	77.3	**	55.1	1749.7	**	971.5
Paid irregular work	19.8	**	11.4	12.5	**	7.1
Housework	91.1	**	99.4	377.9	**	1197.1
Child care	44.1		44.7	453.8	**	774.1
Home maintenance	92.4	**	81.9	105.9	**	66.5
Volunteer work	42.1	*	46.9	28.3		28.5
Help to friends and relatives	82.6		80.2	49.3	*	56.1
Help for chronic problems	13.4	*	17.1	11.7	**	19.8
Help for acute problems	35.9	**	42.9	16.4	**	26.5

Note. N = 3,617

*p < .05. ** p < .01

In this paper I will not present any original empirical findings. I will rather discuss some factors and mechanisms that are likely to play a role in the change (and non-change) of paid and domestic work roles. I will make a number of propositions concerning peoples behavior which are relevant for role change, and present hypotheses about the expected effects. This will cover the largest part of this paper. There will not be much room for discussing empirical evidence from the research literature that supports my view. Yet, I think there are indications that back up my hypotheses, and I will mention a few of them. At the end I will return to the question of why the overall redistribution of roles is stagnating and try to explain the lack of success of policy measures. And finally, I will indicate some implications for further research and policy development.

3. Factors playing a role in the redistribution of roles

1. Stability of behavior patterns and opportunity for change

A large part of the behavior of people in daily life is habitual. Habits are spontaneously and easily formed under the influence of practice and environmental rewards contingencies. Once having been established habits are difficult to change. Examples are simple daily routines such as tooth-brushing and smoking, and complex habits in traffic and work.

The more complex habits are shaped and maintained under social control my means of the 'role mechanism'. The mutual sending of expectations and feedback between people in social settings creates behavior patterns with a great interdependence and stability. By the very nature of the role-mechanism deviations in the behavior of one party invoke corrective responses by the other members of the role set. Thus, like habits in general, behavior based on roles is highly stable and resistant to change. Role-change can, therefore, only be initiated by strong external influences, such as conflict, illness, change of physical setting etc. (cf. Cutrona & Suhr, 1990).

My *hypothesis* is that major changes in the roles of men and women in the family context can only take place at critical moments evoked by strong events such as marriage, moving to another place, change of job, birth of a child, illness, disability, divorce or death. This implies that there is only room for role change at specific moments in the couple's life span and that little or no change is to be expected in-between such moments (cf. Drooglever-Fortuijn, 1993). As I will outline, an actual role-change will only occur if other conditions favour such change

in that particular moment. If the chance to realize role-change in such a critical moment is being missed, one will have to wait till a next occasion, which may be only after years. This point can explain why changes are slow and partial.

2. Values as a basis for roles

An important factor in the acceptance of roles are people's values. Unless roles are forced upon people, one cannot expect them to adopt roles that are in conflict with their personal values. Such roles would lead to a negative self-evaluation and hence undermine the motivation to execute the role (except in cases of psychopathology). Thus people will typically seek roles that are in concordance with their values and avoid roles that are in opposition to them. The operation of this principle can be observed in the field occupational choice, where e.g. people with altruist values search for helping professions, and avoid managerial or entrepreneurial positions.

As for the division of work and family roles between men and women, one has to realize that people with a traditional value pattern will not be inclined to negotiate for the man doing more domestic work and the woman doing more paid work. Even if one of the partners would have a progressive value orientation and the other one a conservative one, there would be no change in the direction of greater equality, at best just conflict.

In this connection I would like to point at the personality trait of 'authoritarianism', which can be seen as set of internalized values (Adorno, 1950; Meloen, 1992). It entails explicit ideas about the differential roles between men and women. On the basis of the psychological theory on authoritarianism one would predict that an authoritarian male would respond to the very idea of taking women's tasks (e.g. the man vacuum cleaning) with disgust and anxiety, while the authoritarian female would similarly respond to the idea of performing male tasks (e.g. repairing the car) (see Meloen et al., 1995). Note that the number of highly authoritarian people amounts to some 10 percent of the population; probably the percentage of couples with at least one highly authoritarian member is greater than 10%.

Values are not just individual attributes, but rather normative views that are socially shared. People live within subcultural entities in which similar values are held. This means that a couple living in a conservative social environment, would face a negative evaluation when considering

an alternative division of roles. The man doing the household duties such as cooking and laundry, or caring for the children, would be ridiculized in such a case, and suffer from lower social esteem (and possibly self-esteem). For women doing activities such as painting the house and doing paid work, the same would apply.

Thus, I *hypothesize* that a role change in the direction of greater equality will only take place when both members of the couple have supporting values, and when they live in a social environment which has supportive values as well. In other cases there will be no such change. An implication of this hypothesis is that overall changes in the division of roles between men and women will take place generation-wise, since values tend to be very stable among people of the same generation, and tend to change between generations. This point can explain why the number of people exhibiting change is limited. Since people with lower education and blue-collar jobs are typically more conservative, it can also explain why among such people change is very limited (cf. Perry Jenkins & Crouter, 1990).

3. Competencies as a prerequisite for performance

Roles can only be fulfilled if people have the competencies needed to perform the tasks implied. I use the term 'competencies' to indicate: (a) know-how, i.e. procedural knowledge, (b) know-what, i.e. declarative knowledge, (c) skill. All three elements are necessary for performance, i.e. for initiating and executing work actions, and for achieving good results. This applies to all tasks in paid and domestic work, complex and simple. E.g. for bathing and dressing a baby one needs a 'script' specifying the successive operations, knowledge about cosmetics and textiles, and practical skill. The same is true for seemingly simple tasks as cooking, sweeping floors, etc.

Concentrating on the male's contribution to domestic work, one could argue that a lack of know-how about household tasks and caring tasks hinders the acceptance of such tasks, since this deficiency precludes the formation of relevant goals and action plans. People do not opt for things of which they don't know how to do it. Thus, unless specific learning conditions are created, a man not knowing how to proceed in executing specific household tasks, is unlikely to adopt such tasks.

A lack of know-what and skills will have similar effects for another reason. People in performance situations usually assess their outcomes beforehand and set their goal levels accordingly. If a person expects failure, which would be the case in the absence of sufficient knowledge and skills, he/she will not accept the task or avoid the actual execution. The reason is to avoid a negative self-evaluation and the shame evoked by failing in the eyes of others. The incompetent male would thus prevent failure vis-a-vis his wife, children (and e.g. neighbours) in domestic work tasks by not accepting them.

If domestic work tasks are accepted in spite of low competence, e.g. due to special circumstances (illness of the woman etc.), or forceful negotiations between man and woman, other effects are likely to appear. The actual execution of the tasks will result in poor performance (e.g. bad cleaning, poor care for the child, bad ironing, or too late washing). Such failure will lead to dissatisfaction, negative self-evaluation and shame, and may consequently produce a lowering of performance standards and/or withdrawal. Thus slide-back would be predicted.

Since in a typical situation the domestic work tasks taken up by the male were formerly performed by the women, one must realize that there is a social situation which calls for 'social comparison'. Comparing the male's and female's performance both partners will acknowledge the better performance of the female - assuming greater competence of the female - which leads to an according attribution of results to differential competence and favours a slide-back. When the male and the female have agreed to perform the same tasks simultaneously (or successively) such social comparison takes place as well. But in addition there may be a direct competition between the partners, which in case of continuous poor performance of the male may result in the woman taking back all of the work to be done ("let me do it") and thus in a restoration of the previous division of work.

On the basis of this my *hypothesis* is that a lack of competencies at the side of the male reduces the likelihood of accepting domestic work roles and enhances the likelihood of slide-back. Both the implications for self-esteem, the actual performance result, and social comparison are supposed to play an intermediary role.

Although I have concentrated on the male, the same principles may apply to the female. Research on women in work settings has shown that women often set lower levels of achievement, and avoid jobs with high performance demands (cf Davidson & Cooper, 1992; Nicholson & West, 1988). Although this phenomenon has often been explained in terms of gender identity and sex-typing of occupational roles, the lack of competence and self-efficacy may have explanatory power as well.

Some implications of the foregoing are that role-change in the direction of greater equality will be more successful (a) among male who have acquired domestic work competencies during earlier phases of life (in childhood and/or during a period of living single), (b) among male with greater intelligence and adroitness, (c) when the female partner is supportive and non-punitive, (d) when the female partner has poor domestic work competencies herself.

4. Temporal, spatial and functional constraints

All work activity, whether paid or domestic, takes place in time and space. The degree to which multiple tasks can be combined, i.e. be performed successively or simultaneously, depends on temporal and spatial compatibility of the activities involved, given personal and technological capabilities.

A person can only do multiple activities at the same time, when being the same place. And activities can only be done successively in adjoining spaces. Since cooking and caring for children can often take place in the same space, they can also be done simultaneously. Bringing children to the school and shopping can be combined successively because they take place in adjoining spaces. Ironing and shopping can of course not be done simultaneously, nor can bringing children to school and arranging beds.

Many examples can be given of temporal and spatial compatibility and incompatibility tasks. The same is true for constraints stemming from sequences. Certain activities have to be done in a particular order: one cannot make the children's beds before they went up, and not prepare breakfast after leaving the home for work, etc.

Such kinds of constraints look trivial. Yet they are of importance when discussing the possibility to combine paid work tasks and domestic work tasks. Generally speaking the engagement in paid work at a location far from the home - typical for most employed male - restricts the

possibilities to combine tasks, especially when considerable time is needed for commuting. Of course, the constraints met by the people at the level of the household depend to a great degree on social conventions such as the opening times of schools, shops, and public services, as well as the official working hours of firms.

Functional constraints stem from psychological capabilities of the person. First of all, people have limited attentional capacities. As a result, people can typically perform only one attention demanding task at the same time, while a few routine activities can be done simultaneously (unless they call for the engagement of the same parts of the body). Of course, activities calling for shifts of attention - such as cooking and talking to the children - can be done intermittently. Secondly, the psychophysiological state of the person restricts the degree to which attentional and physical capacity avails. This state functions during the day, thus changing the available capacity. It is known that the demands of a task on the person varies with the available capacity. Thus the same task may require more effort when being performed at the end of a working day than during the day.

Technical support tools are of great help in reducing the demands that work tasks pose in people. The arrival of machines such as the washing machine, the drier, the dishwasher, the oven, the micro-wave have opened the possibility to do more and more tasks simultaneously or in a reduced time-span with considerably lower demands on attentional capacity. See Table 4 for data on the use of household technology (from Tijdens et al., 1994; see CBS, 1992).

Table 4: Use of household equipment (from Tijdens et al., 1994)

	1974	1983	1990
Household equipment			
Electrical sewing machine	58%	71%	74%
Dish-washer	6%	12%	17%
Laundry dryer	9%	18%	33%
Deep freezer	21%	53%	63%

All the constraints mentioned determine the possibility for both male and female to combine paid work and domestic work tasks. While some of them are well-visible and much debated, others are easily overlooked. Yet, they could help to explain why a redivision of roles in the

direction of greater equality does not happen. The obvious constraints will put a limit upon the arrangements that people agree to, the less visible constraints will undermine the effectiveness of the agreed arrangement.

My *hypothesis*, therefore, is that the redivision of roles is limited by existing constraints, unless such constraints are explicitly modified. Males opting for more domestic work in addition to paid jobs, will often fail to realize their intentions to the full. Women opting for more paid work in addition to domestic work will similarly in fail in their efforts. Failure to live-up to expressed intentions enhances the chance of relapse and the restoration of the previous situation. This points at the importance of changing the constraints by deciding for another job, another living place, another means of transportation, the purchase of technical support tools, etcetera. Critical moments in the family life cycle as mentioned before are most appropriate for such change.

Substitution of labour by means of the employment of other people might also be mentioned in this context, since couples often rely to such measures in order to overcome perceived constraints. These measures - hiring a maid, a baby-sitter, a repair man etc. - do typically not increase the share of the male in domestic work, and therefore do *not* lead to a more balanced distribution of paid and domestic work. For that reason I leave them out of consideration here.

5. *Expected outcomes*

The redistribution of roles between the man and the woman in the family does not only change their inputs in the common cause, but also the outputs obtained. The expected outputs are an important point when considering alternative work arrangements. The outcomes include:

- economic outcomes: income, capital, goods and services
- psychological outcomes: competencies, self-image
- social outcomes: power and esteem.

Income can be transposed into the other types of outcomes again.

All outcomes together provide for a certain level of satisfaction and quality of life among the family members.

In considering alternative arrangements for paid and domestic work, people will assess the expected outcomes on the basis of personal preferences and dislikes. Not all aspects are

necessarily made explicit in evaluation. The economic facets - income, goods and services - are likely to be discussed in explicit terms, while psychological and social outcomes will often remain implicit. Exactly these outcomes may be a source for 'resistance to change' among the partners. Thus males may object to a redivision that threatens their self-image, social esteem, or power position in the economic domain. For females the same applies: they may e.g. object to a weakening of mother role, since that would negatively affect their self-image, or object to giving up their power position as manager of the household. These outcomes may not only be evaluated in short-term framework, but also in a long-term perspective that includes peoples' life-goals and expectations of the future.

My *hypothesis* is that role-change in the direction of greater equality will be hampered to the degree that the partners expect psychological and social outcomes, evaluated as unfavourable on the short term and/or the long term. The implication of this point is that there may be hidden factors in the decision making of couples that reduces the scope of work role redivision.

Although I am stressing the importance of outcomes, it should be acknowledged that people may also compare input and output simultaneously, and evaluate different arrangements in terms of equity. This tendency may be more prevalent among females (Robinson & Spitze, 1992).

Of course there are several other factors involved in the redistribution process. An example is provided by the differential expectations of young males and females regarding work and family roles. It has been found (De Zwart et al., 1993) that Dutch boys and girls in secondary education have discrepant ideas about paid and household work of their future spouses and themselves. Cultural factors at the work place are another example (Mozes-Philips & Wester, 1993). Even though such factors are of relevance, I will confine myself to the factors mentioned above.

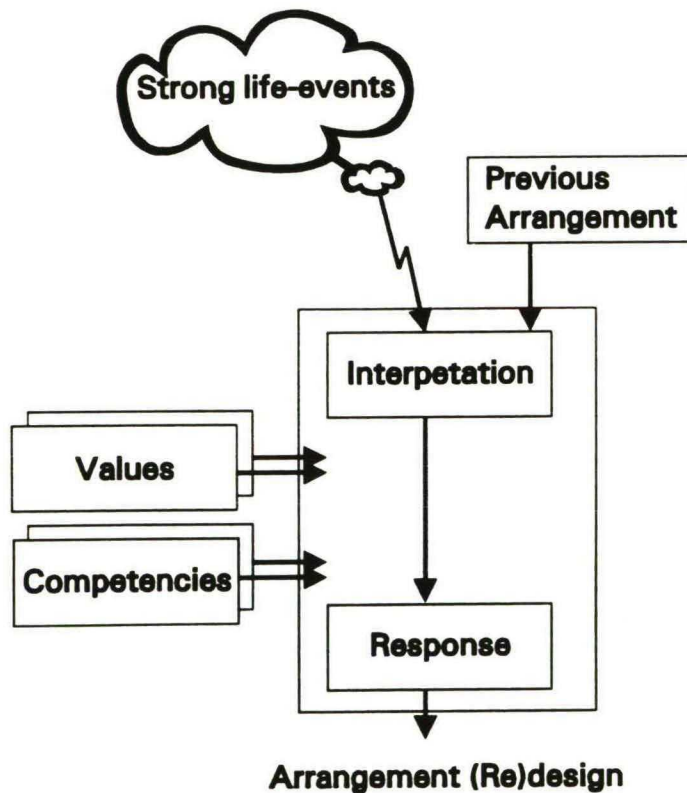
4. Processes

After having discussed some of the factors that may play a role in the redivision of paid and domestic work among men and women, I would not like to shift the focus to the processes by which role-change may occur. I will describe role-change in terms of four successive stages, i.e.:

- Arrangement review
- Arrangement (re)design
- Changing conditions & Establishing new roles
- Role enactment.

In contrast to what is commonly assumed by researchers and policy makers, I contend that people do not make evaluations and take decisions on their roles on a day-to-day basis. Like is the case with habits in general, such meta-activities tend to be avoided until there emerges a compelling reason to question the adequacy of the roles. Such a compelling reasons, emerging either from life-events or from a catastrophes or conflicts in the role execution itself, will call for what I designate as '*arrangement review*', i.e. a discussion on the appropriateness of the current paid-domestic work arrangement.

Figure 3: Processes involved in the phase of Arrangement Review



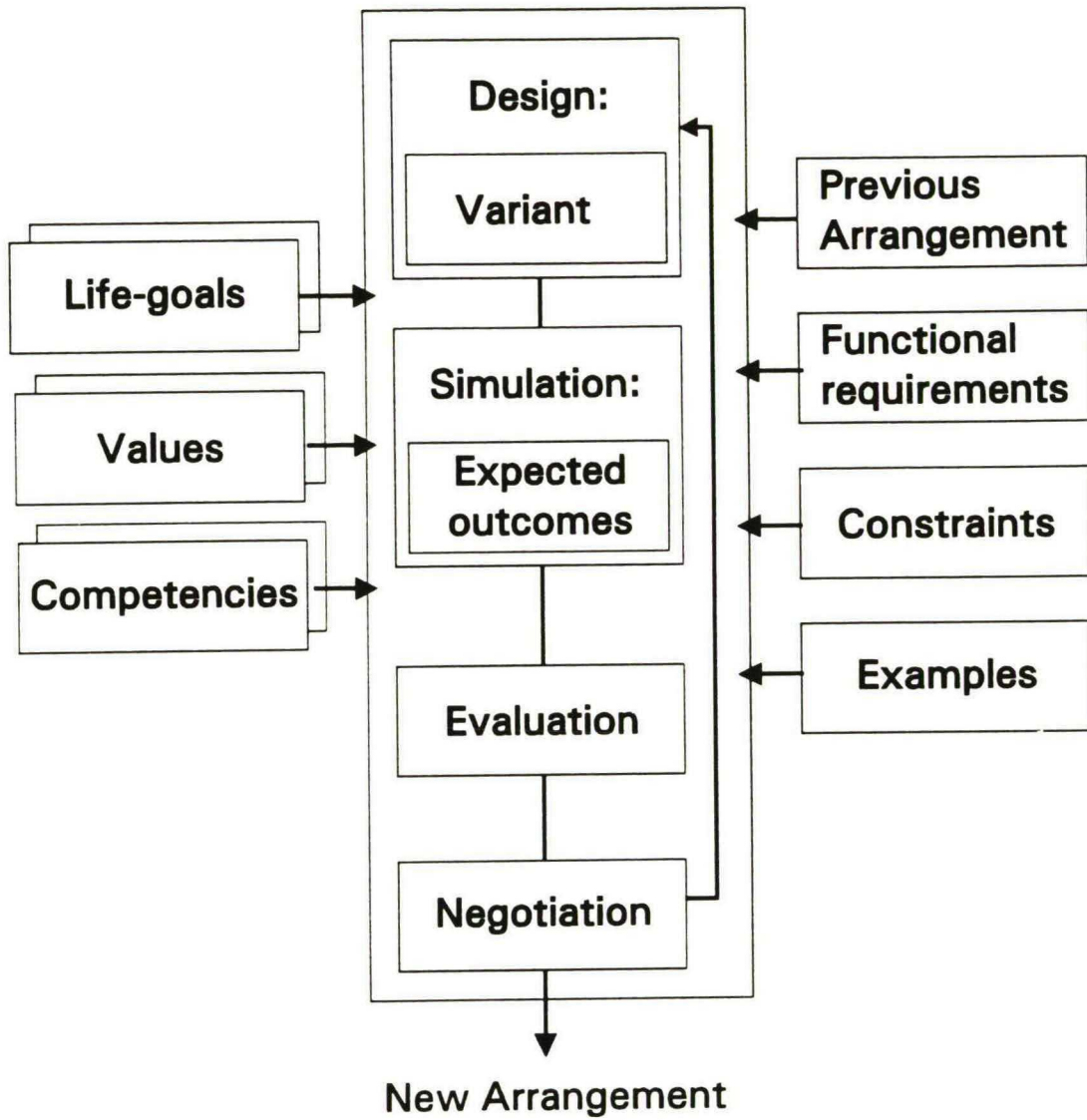
The Arrangement Review can be seen as the *first stage* of a possible role-change. It will result in an exchange of analytic and evaluative statements by the partners, as well as in the generation of ideas about how to respond to these events. If felt necessary, functional solutions will be proposed; if not, the arrangement will remain the same. Functional solutions may or may not involve a redivision of roles between the man and the woman. Changing the times of going to bed, or substituting the woman's household work by a machine or another person, would not imply a redivision. See for the latter type of solutions by Tijdens et al. (1994).

As I have hypothesized before, conservative values and lack of male competence in domestic work, are likely to reduce the choice for redivision and favour continuation of the existing arrangement (or a substitution strategy). This is shown in Figure 3, which depicts the processes that are supposed to be involved.

If the couple feels the necessity to change the arrangement, and has developed an idea about certain functional solutions, another process is likely to follow. I will call this '*arrangement (re)design*'. This process can be seen as a joint problem solving activity, in which the problem is analyzed in some detail, potential solutions are generated, tested and revised, until an acceptable end-solution is obtained. Yet, the process is more than merely making a new design. It will also involve a negotiation between the partners about solutions that they find more and less attractive. A certain degree of conflict is inherent in this situation. There is no reason to assume that the partners will fully agree about the best solution. Both partners may use persuasive or forceful arguments to reach agreement on a certain solution. This solution may be more at the advantage of one partner - either male or female - than of the other partner, and the commitment may vary accordingly.

The hypothesized process is shown in Figure 4. The solutions are alternative arrangements which have different outcome expectations. The evaluation is in terms of expected short-term and long-term outcomes. The inputs from the contextual side are: the previous role-arrangement, the work to be done (functional requirements) depending on the household setting, the number of children, the specific care demands, etc.; situational constraints and examples of other people's arrangements. Inputs from the personal side are: life goals, values and competencies. As said before, the values, competencies, constraints determine to which degree the new arrangement will imply a greater involvement of the male in domestic work tasks.

Figure 4: Processes involved in the phase of Arrangement (Re)design



It should be noted that changing roles is never a smooth and easy process for the people involved (cf. Fisher & Cooper, 1990). It is known to raise strong emotions, partly because of the (implicit) criticism on earlier activities, partly because of uncertainties related to the new roles. The emotional nature of the process may limit its rationality. One may not expect the participants to explore all options, and to make well-balanced evaluations. Technical sides of the arrangement, such as household logistics, may well suffer from this.

Once a new arrangement has been agreed upon, it has to be implemented. Thus a *third stage of changing conditions and establishing new roles* occurs. Again one should note the uncertainties involved and the emotions elicited by these uncertainties. The more effective changes are probably those that are the most straining: change of job, finding another house, re-arranging the house etc. since they offer the possibility to take away some of the constraints of the previous arrangement.

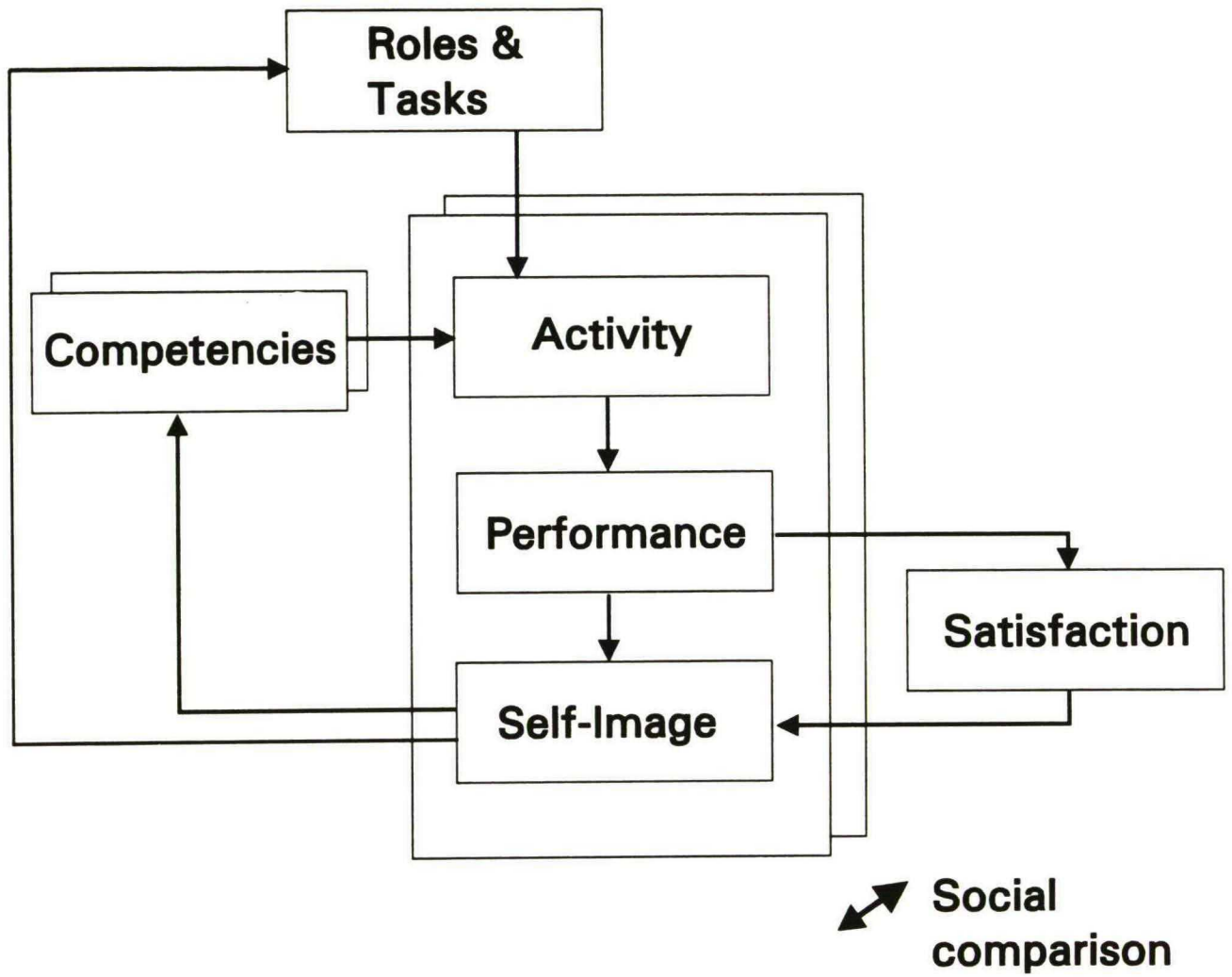
The *fourth stage* is that of *enactment*. The new roles are being put in practice by both partners. That is to say: the tasks are being executed, resulting in a certain array of performances. As shown in Figure 5 the further course of events is likely to depend on:

- 1) competencies in relation to the tasks;
- 2) performance results, i.e. quantity and speed, quality, timing etc. and the resulting satisfaction of the family members;
- 3) social comparison of the results obtained by the male and the female.

As was explained before, poor results may affect the level of achievement in further trials, and lead to avoidance behavior, while good results reinforce the pattern. Depending on the behaviour of the other partner there is a greater or smaller risk of relapse to the old role division.

Thus, the life cycle of a family will consist of several phases during which the role division may take on different shapes. The transition between such phases are supposedly marked by role-changes following the stages just mentioned. The applicability of this view and the relative stability of roles across life cycle phases is exemplified by the study of Tijdens et al., (1994).

Figure 5: Processes involved in the phase of Role Enactment



They have analyzed the activities of people during six life phases i.e.:

- 1 living together without children at home
- 2 married without children at home
- 3 youngest child at home < 4 years
- 4 youngest child at home 4-11 years
- 5 youngest child at home 12-17 years
- 6 youngest child at home ≥ 18 years.

Table 5 shows the part of the woman in paid work, home work and care for children during the successive phases, expressed in numbers of hours per day and in percentages of the total for women and men. Table 6 shows the numbers of hours per day spent by women and men on various domestic activities during the six life-phases. It should be noted that the phases as categorized by Tijdens et al. (1994) do not strictly correspond with the life-cycle phases as mentioned before, since they are marked by different events. The most conspicuous change occurs after phases 1 and 2, i.e. the birth of the first child. Otherwise the data show great stability¹.

5. Why does redistribution of paid and domestic work fail?

Policy makers have proposed a variety of measures that are supposed to facilitate the participation of women in paid work and the participation of men in domestic work. Typical elements of social policy are: financial compensation schemes for maternity leave, parental leave, child-care leave, child-care facilities and cash benefits (cf. Gauthier, 1995). Company programmes include: creches, flexible working hours, homework facilities, compensation for childcare and transportation, programmes for reintegration of women, training and promotion programmes for women and focus groups (cf. European Social Innovation Prize, 1995). All this points at underlying economic rather than emancipatory motives for such policies.

¹ It should be noted that the data presented by Tijdens et al. are based on a cross-section of cohorts and not on longitudinal data.

Table 6: Allocation of time spent on paid work and domestic work (N = 9788)

Family phase	Paid work		Household work		Caring work for children		Total
	hours p/d	share woman	hours p/d	share woman	hours p/d	share woman	hours p/d
Phase 1	14.7	48%	2.2	59%	0	-	16.9
Phase 2	14.2	43%	2.5	72%	0		16.7
Phase 3	11.8	30%	4.5	82%	7.8	71%	24.1
Phase 4	12.4	32%	4.8	81%	5.6	66%	22.8
Phase 5	13.0	35%	4.2	83%	3.9	59%	21.1
Phase 6	12.5	38%	3.9	79%	2.3	61%	18.7
Average	12.9	36%	3.9	79%	4.0	68%	20.8

Source: Tijdens et al. (1994), Table 3.4

Table 7 Time expenditure on caring and paid work (N = 1420)

Family phase		Caring work						Working hours	Total
		Cooking/ dishes	cleaning	laundry/ ironing	shopping	children (till 4 yrs)	caring for partner		
Phase 0	woman	0.8	0.8	0.3	0.5			6.3	8.7
Phase 1/2	woman	0.9	1.1	0.4	0.4		0.1	6.1	9.0
	man	0.4	0.3	0.1	0.2		0.1	7.9	9.0
Phase 3	woman	1.2	2.2	0.8	0.6	9.4	0.1	2.0	16.3
	man	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.2	3.9	0.1	8.0	12.8
Phase 4	woman	1.3	2.3	0.7	0.6	8.4	0.1	2.5	15.9
	man	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.2	3.2	0.1	7.9	12.0
Phase 5	woman	1.3	2.2	0.7	0.6		0.0	2.7	7.5
	man	0.3	0.3	0.1	0.2		0.1	7.7	8.7
Phase 6	woman	1.1	2.2	0.7	0.6		0.1	4.0	8.7
	man	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.2		0.1	7.3	8.1
Average	woman	1.2	1.9	0.7	0.6		0.1	3.4	7.9
	man	0.3	0.3	0.0	0.2		0.1	7.8	8.7

Source: Tijdens et al. (1994). Table 3.5

Two points are interesting to note. *First*, most policy measures are directed towards the female. Their objective is to facilitate paid work by women and/or to the combination of paid work and domestic work by women. The implicit assumption seems to be that if women do more paid work, men will start doing more domestic work. There is absolutely no justification for this idea (e.g. Shelton, 1990; Beckwith, 1992; Hossain & Roopnarine, 1993). Creches - one of the favourite tools of emancipatory policy - may increase the labour participation of women (Tijdens et al., 1994), they do very little, if anything, to make men washing more dishes or cooking more meals.

There are hardly any measures directed at the male. The only exception being the opportunity for fathers to take parental leave, in order to get engaged in the care of newly born children. No policy measures aim at durable role change in the male in the direction of a larger share of the domestic work.

Secondly, most policy measures seem to be based on the assumption that people are a homogeneous collection of instant-decision makers, who make a rational choice from a given set of options. There is virtually no recognition of the fact that people take *no* decisions most of the time, that the decisions they do take are of limited rationality and have long term consequences. Moreover it is overlooked that decisions are influenced by peoples' personal history - values and competencies, but also recollections of how their parents used to divide roles (Findlay & Lawrence, 1991) - as well as by the social setting. The differences between people from successive generations and the fact that changes occur cohort-wise, tend to be ignored as well. Thus, one might say that there is marked discrepancy between social policy and behavioral reality in the domain of paid and domestic work by men and women.

To some degree these observations apply to social science as well (e.g. Owen et al., 1992). Like the policy-makers most researchers have focused on the working role of the woman, and the combination of that role with the domestic role. But the factors relating to the domestic role of the man have received very limited attention. This situation is recently changing, though (see e.g. Palomba, 1994; Knijn et al., 1994; Bernett & Baruch, 1987; Wheelock, 1990), as is also exemplified in the research by WORC (Van Dongen, 1994; Van den Elzen & Van Dongen, 1995; Van Dongen et al., 1995).

The time horizon in the research on male and female roles is rather limited. Few studies in this domain have recognized that peoples' current role behavior is affected by past socialization experiences. The link between the practices of the parents and the behavior of their children once they have become parents has hardly been investigated. The other end of the time continuum, i.e. the future, with the goals and ambitions associated to it, has been left out of consideration as well. Yet, as I have contended, all these life-time related factors, as well as the social dynamics in the life of the family, may be crucial for understanding what does and what does not change and why.

Considering all the restraining and delaying factors involved one might raise the question whether the redistribution of paid and domestic work roles is failing indeed. Would it have been reasonable to expect more change or faster change? What would have been an acceptable result? Can policy makers or scientists specify, at all, what is the norm?

One can, in any case, also point at successful changes among specific groups in the population, and especially at the changing roles of fathers (e.g. Mozes-Philips & Wester, 1993; Van Dongen et al., 1995) which show that modest overall changes may hide real role changes in specific segments of society.

6. Implications for policy and research

Let me underline that what I have postulated is hypothetical. Making inferences from other behavioral domains and from general theories, mainly in the field of psychology, I have suggested that certain factors and mechanisms are involved in redistribution of roles between men and women. If what I have asserted is true, that is to say gives a valid account of present-day empirical reality, it would have some interesting implications for social policies aiming at a better balance between men and women in the domain of work.

A few of these implications are the following:

- 1) Policy measures should be directed at people in critical life stages, e.g. those expecting a child, moving to a new house, or entering a new job; both information on alternative

paid-domestic work arrangements and packages of support measures would have to be offered to people in periods of transition.

- 2) Policies should be differentiated between generations and cultural groups. Efforts to facilitate a short-term re-arrangement of roles should be concentrated on target groups whose values are congruent with such change. For other groups - older people, lower educated, cultural minorities with conservative values - one should rather aim for influences on the long term. E.g. a change of children's norms through the educational system with the expectation to affect the next generation.
- 3) Special interventions should be directed at the present generation of parents, and in particular the mother. Affecting the behavior of the mother is important, since it is of crucial importance for the boy's opportunity to familiarize himself with household and caring tasks, and to obtain the competencies needed in later life. Mothers should be supported in transferring household tasks to their sons and to provide them with learning opportunities.
- 4) The development of proper (i.e. non sexed-typed) role models for girls and boys might be stimulated through the educational system to a higher degree than is the case now. One might think of offering training sessions in household tasks involving fathers and mothers.
- 5) Men who are prepared to take up domestic work should be given the opportunity to receive training and advice in various household and caring tasks. Such an intervention would compensate for lacking opportunities to acquire domestic competencies at an earlier moment.
- 6) The interface between paid and domestic work should be improved for both women and men. Reducing temporal constraints by increasing flexibility of working hours is one important step. The reduction of spatial constraints by tele-homework, is another one. But other solutions could be elaborated as well, such as creating access to public services and shops near the place of work, or the location of schools near health or shopping centres, etc. Families in search of alternative arrangements might profit from an expert service providing advice on domestic work schemes, ergonomics of household work and household logistics, including communication and transportation aspects.

Here I would like to finish. Whether my hypotheses are valid indeed is something which remains to be demonstrated. I hope that I have opened an alternative view on the matter and that some researchers in this field feel sufficiently challenged to put these ideas to an empirical test.

References

- Adorno, T.W., Frenkel-Brunswik, E., Levinson, D. & Sanford, R.N. (1950). *The authoritarian personality*. New York: Harper & Row.
- Barnett, R.C. & Baruch, G.K. (1987). Determinants of fathers' participation in family work. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 49: 29-40.
- Barrère-Maurisson, M.-A. (1992). *La division du travail: La vie en double*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France.
- Beckwith, J.B. (1992). Stereotypes and reality in the division of household labor. *Social Behavior and Personality*, 20: 283-288.
- Blair, S.L. & Lichter, D.T. (1991). Measuring the division of household labor: Gender segregation of housework among American couples. *Journal of Family Issues*, 12: 91-113.
- CBS (1992). In Nederland worden vrouwen laat moeder. *Statistisch Magazine*, 4: 5-6.
- CBS (1991). *De tijdsbesteding van de Nederlandse bevolking, kerncijfers 1988*. Den Haag / Heerlen: Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek.
- Cernegoj-Sadar, N. (1995). *Gender division of labour. Public policy, labour market participation, and family experiences*. Seminar at WORC, Tilburg on November 22, 1995.
- Cutrona, C. & Suhr, J. (1990). The transition to parenthood and the importance of social support. In: S. Fisher & C.L. Cooper (Eds.), *On the move: The psychology of change and transition*. Chichester: John Wiley, pp. 111-125.
- Davidson, M.J. & Cooper, C.L. (1992). *Shattering the glass-ceiling. The woman manager*. London: Paul Chapman.
- De Zwart, R., Wagenaar, M.F., Van Praag, B.M.S., Diekstra, R.F.W. & Van Praag, S. (1993). *Scholierenonderzoek 1992*. Den Haag: NIBUD.
- De Jong, A. & De Olde, C. (1994). *Hoe ouders het werk verdelen: Onderzoek naar de totstandkoming van de verdeling van het betaalde werk en het werk thuis tussen ouders met jonge kinderen*. Den Haag: VUGA.
- Drooglever-Fortuijn, J. (1993). *Een druk bestaan: Tijdsbesteding en ruimtegebruik van tweeverdieners met kinderen*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.
- Statistical series (1995). *Employment Observatory Central & Eastern Europe No. 8*.

- European Social Innovation Prize (1995). *New Ways - Newsletter of the European network 'Families and Work'*, 2: 3-10.
- Findlay, B.M. & Lawrence, J.A. (1991). Who does what? Gender-related distribution of household tasks for couples, their families of origin and their ideals. *Australian Journal of Marriage and Family*, 12: 3-11.
- Fisher, S. & Cooper, C.L. (Eds.). *On the move: The psychology of change and transition*. Chichester: John Wiley, pp. 111-125.
- Gauthier, A.H. (1995). *Policies and the division of labour within families: The neglected link*. Tilburg: WORC, WORC PAPER 95.04.006/6.
- Geurts, J.J.M. (1992). De verdeling van formele en informele arbeid. *Economisch Statistische Berichten*, 2.
- Hannah, J.A. & Quarter, J. (1992). Sharing household labour: 'Could you do the bedtime story while I do the dishes?' Special Issue: Work, private life, and mental health: The new role of the community. *Canadian Journal of Community Mental Health*, 11: 147-162.
- Hooghiemstra, B.T.J. & Niphuis-Nell, M. (1993). *Sociale atlas van de vrouw, deel 2: Arbeid, inkomen en faciliteiten om werken en de zorg voor kinderen te combineren*. Rijswijk / Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau / VUGA.
- Hossain, Z. & Roopnarine, J.L. (1993). Division of household labor and child care in dual-earner African-American families with infants. *Sex Roles*, 29: 571-583.
- Kahn, R.L. (1991). The forms of women's work. In: M. Frankenhaeuser, U. Lundberg & M. Chesney (Eds.). *Women, work and health*. New York / London: Plenum Press, pp. 65-83.
- Kempeneers, M. & Lelièvre, E. (1991). *Emploi et famille dans l'Europe des douze*. Commission des Communautés Européennes. Eurobarometer No. 35.
- Knijjn, T.A., Van Nunen, A. & Van de Avort, A. (1994). Zorgend vaderschap. *Amsterdams Sociologisch Tijdschrift*, 3: 70-97.
- Knüppel, W. (1995). *Division of labour in families: Relevant data sources in Eurostat*. Tilburg: WORC, WORC PAPER 95.05.010/6.
- Meloen, J.D. (1992). The F Scale as predictor of facism: An overview of 40 years of authoritarianism research. In: W.F. Stone, G. Lederer & R. Christie (Eds.), *Strengths and weakness: The authoritarian personality today*. New York: Springer Verlag, pp. 47-69.

- Meloen, J.D., Roe, R.A., Frinking, G. & Halman, L. (1995). *Autoritairisme en gemankeerde emancipatie*. Tilburg: WORC (Onderzoeksvoorstel).
- Mozes-Philips, M. & Wester, F. (1993). *Zorgen voor de toekomst*. 's Gravenhage: VUGA.
- Nicholson, N. & West, M.A. (1988). *Managerial job change: Men and women in transition*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Owen, A.J., Carsky, M.L. & Dolan, E.M. (1992). Home-based employment: Historical and current considerations. Special Issue: At-home income generation: I. *Journal of Family and Economic Issues*, 13: 121-138.
- Palomba, R. (1994). New fathers: Changes in the family and emerging policy issues. In: M.C.P. Van Dongen, G.A.B. Frinking & M.J.G. Jacobs (Eds.) (1995), *Changing fatherhood: An interdisciplinary perspective*. Amsterdam: Thesis.
- Perry Jenkins, M. & Crouter, A.C. (1990). Men's provider-role attitudes: Implications for household work and marital satisfaction. *Journal of Family Issues*, 11: 136-156.
- Robinson, J. & Spitze, G. (1992). Whistle while you work? The effect of household task performance on women's and men's well-being. *Social Science Quarterly*, 73: 844-861.
- Rohjan, K. & Willemsen, T.M. (1994). The evaluation of the effectiveness and likability of gender-role congruent and gender-role incongruent leaders. *Sex Roles*, 30: 109-199.
- Shelton, B.A. (1990). The distribution of household tasks: Does wife's employment status make a difference? *Journal of Family Issues*, 11: 115-135.
- Silver, H. (1993). Homework and domestic work. *Sociological Forum*, 8: 181-204.
- Sociaal en Cultureel Rapport 1992*. (1992). Rijswijk: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- Sociaal en Cultureel Rapport 1994*. (1994). Rijswijk: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau.
- Starrels, M.E. (1994). Husbands' involvement in female gender-typed household chores. *Sex Roles*, 31: 473-491.
- Tijdens, K., Maas van den Brink, H., Noom, M. & Groot, W. (1994). *Maatschappelijke effecten van strategieën van huishoudens om betaalde arbeid en zorg te combineren*. Den Haag: OSA.
- Van den Akker, P., Van der Avort, A. & Van den Elzen, A. (1994). Rolgedrag van mannen en vrouwen: Gemankeerde emancipatie. In: P Ester & L. Halman (Eds.), *De cultuur van de verzorgingsstaat*. Tilburg: Tilburg University Press, pp. 135-167.
- Van den Elzen, A. & Van Dongen, M (1995). *De combinatie van ouderschap en betaald werk door mannen*. Tilburg: WORC, WORC PAPER 95.02.003/6.

- Van Dongen, M.C.P., Frinking, G.A.B. & Jacobs, M.J.G. (Eds.) (1995). *Changing fatherhood: An interdisciplinary perspective*. Amsterdam: Thesis.
- Van Dongen, M (1994). *One thing or the other? Caring for children and paid labour: Men's aspirations and the extent of their realisations*. Tilburg: WORC, WORC PAPER 94.05.024/6.
- Van der Lippe, T. (1993). *Arbeidsverdeling tussen mannen en vrouwen: Een interdisciplinaire studie naar betaald en huishoudelijk werk binnen huishoudens*. Amsterdam: Thesis.
- Vossen, A. & Nelissen, J. (1996). *Motherhood and employment. A comparative analysis of longitudinal and transversal microsimulation data for The Netherlands*. Tilburg: WORC, WORC PAPER 95.03.005/6.
- Wheelock, J. (1990). *Husbands at home: The domestic economy in a post-industrial society*. London: Routledge.
- Willemsen, T. (1993). *Sekse verplicht*. Tilburg: Tilburg University Press (oratie).
- Willemsen, T. (1994). Hollandse nieuwe? Over de context van 'nieuw vaders; in Nederland. *Tijdschrift voor Vrouwenstudies*, 15: 35-46.
- Women and the labour market (1991). *Employment in Europe - Trends*, 17.

Bibliotheek K. U. Brabant



17 000 01273016 5